



NEWS RELEASE

32ND INFANTRY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

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Patrol base named for Wisconsin Guard soldier turned over to Iraqi forces

SAMARRA, Iraq — The changing role of U.S. forces in Iraq was evident across the entire country June 30, but in Samarra it also created a poignant moment for those who remembered Wisconsin Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Todd Olson.

Olson, who died Dec. 27, 2004, of wounds he suffered in action in Samarra early in his tour with 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, was honored at a ceremony turning a Samarra patrol base over to the government of Iraq. The outpost, Patrol Base Olson, had carried his name for more than four years.

“We have won this war because of men like Staff Sgt. Todd Olson and the efforts and sacrifices of all of our Iraqi brethren in attendance today,” said Army Lt. Col. Samuel Whitehurst, commander of the 25th Infantry Division’s 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

As Patrol Base Olson was turned over to Iraqi forces, its name was changed to Fond'k Albo Hera. The Arabic name translates into English as “Lake Hotel,” recognizing the military post’s previous use as a hotel and casino on the shore of a small lake on the city’s northern edge.

The U.S.-Iraq security agreement calls for the withdrawal of all U.S. combat troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. One of the agreement’s provisions called for U.S. combat forces to move out of Iraqi cities, towns and villages by June 30, 2009. Patrol Base Olson was among more than 100 combat outposts vacated by U.S. forces over the past nine months.

“Today we are witnessing a transition that does not divide us, but further unifies us in our combined vision to protect and serve the Iraqi people and specifically the people of Samarra,” Whitehurst said.

And for the former hotel-casino — named, until June 30, for Todd Olson— it’s back to the future.

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Patrol Base Olson

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“This facility represents the tourist potential for the city of Samarra,” said Army Maj. Kareem Montague, the battalion’s executive officer. “Our desire is to return this asset back to the city. To do this, we first must reduce our presence here and turn it back over to the government of Iraq.”

A Multi-National Corps–Iraq news release contributed to this story.

Photo thumbnail



CUTLINE: U.S. soldiers salute the memory of Wisconsin Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Todd Olson while Iraqi forces raise the flag of Iraq at the turnover of Patrol Base Olson in Samarra, Iraq, June 30. The base had been named in honor of Olson, who was killed in an attack in Samarra in 2004. It is now called Fond'k Albo Hera. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jazz Burney.

Note: High resolution photo can be downloaded from the Wisconsin National Guard Web site (<http://dma.wi.gov/dma/news/media.asp>) or email tim.donovan@us.army.mil.